

ASSEMBLY – 35th SESSION

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMISSION

Agenda Item 44: Report on the Use of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Fund

INCREASING ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

SUMMARY

This paper proposes actions to substantially decrease the use of hard copy means of communication with Contracting States and increase the use of electronic communications, in order to increase efficiency and conserve both financial and natural resources.

REFERENCES

A35-WP/36 – *Enhancement of ICAO Standards*
A35-WP/32 – *Report on the Use of the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Fund*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 During the past Triennium, ICAO has made greater use of electronic means of communication with Contracting States. Two examples of this use are the publication of State Letters on the ICAONET, and the use of electronic equipment for a “paperless” Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection (CAEP) meeting at Headquarters. While these are steps in the right direction, ICAO should develop and implement a general policy of using electronic means of communication wherever possible. This policy would both increase efficiency and save resources.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 ICAO spends over \$300,000 per year on air cargo costs, shipping paper copies of documents around the world. Most of these shipping costs, as well as the printing and reproduction costs, could be eliminated by making the documents available electronically where possible. This magnitude of monetary savings is quite significant, given ICAO’s budgetary restrictions.

2.2 A35-WP/36 notes a proposal to use electronic communication with States in the development of Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs), and estimates that this would shorten the consultation process by five to six weeks. SARPs development is not the only process that electronic communications

would facilitate: invitation responses to ICAO Panel meetings, for example, could come back from States in days, rather than in weeks, allowing for more efficient meeting planning.

2.3 From an environmental point of view, shipping paper copies of documents is wasteful of natural resources, not only in the thousands of pounds of paper expended, but also in the resources required to transport them. ICAO has taken the lead in promoting environmentally responsible policies in international aviation and should practice similar policies in its own organization.

2.4 Documents sent through the monthly air cargo are frequently held up in Customs offices, further delaying the receipt of important information by States.

2.5 During ICAO meetings, such as this Assembly session, ICAO provides thousands of paper copies of working and information papers to meeting delegates although it has the facilities to provide the documents in electronic form, as it did during the recent CAEP meeting. ICAO Headquarters also has the electronic infrastructure to allow delegates to read or print out any document that he or she needs, further obviating the need to distribute complete sets of paper copies.

2.6 As mentioned, ICAO is already moving in the direction of electronic communications, not only in the areas of online publications and paperless meetings, but in the development of online databases such as the planned extension of the Audit Findings and Differences Database (AFDD) of the Safety Oversight Audit Program. If procedures can be established to allow States to file their differences online using this database, it is possible to identify central points of contact within States for electronic distribution of materials traditionally sent via the air cargo.

2.7 The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has already discontinued distribution of hard copy documents to non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations. In addition, IMO Council is considering options to limit distribution of hard copy documents to Member States that subscribe to its membership web site.

3. DISCUSSION

3.1 ICAO, through the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Fund, has already made great strides in the direction of electronic communications. The United States strongly supports the enhancements to ICAO websites outlined in A35-WP/32 as well as continued efforts to make ICAO-NET and ICAO's other websites a reliable and effective means of communication between ICAO and States.

3.2 According to A35-WP/32, 168 of 188 Contracting States already have access to the ICAO-NET. ICAO should take advantage of electronic communications with this vast majority of States whenever possible, adding other States as they acquire the needed technologies to access the ICAO-NET. The Assembly should urge States without access to the ICAO-NET to take the necessary steps to enable them to receive ICAO documentation electronically. In fact, technical assistance efforts in this area may be useful for the remaining 20 States to acquire the minimal level of automation necessary for electronic mail and Internet access.

3.3 The real obstacles to a policy of electronic communications are not primarily technological, but administrative. Central points of contact for ICAO affairs—with current, valid electronic mail addresses—would need to be identified and maintained within each State, and a system for tracking both outgoing and incoming mail would need to be set up. There would obviously be other considerations as well, but any initial effort to establish processes and procedures would be more than repaid by the savings in physical and human resources that come with electronic communication.

4. **ACTION BY THE ASSEMBLY**

4.1 The Assembly is invited to:

- a) *urge* Contracting States without access to the ICAO-NET to take the necessary steps to enable them to receive ICAO documentation electronically
- b) *direct* the Council to develop a system for replacing hard paper copies of communications with States that have the means to receive these communications for the purpose of reducing the amount of paper documents distributed to States and the money spent in producing and transporting them.